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August 21, 2015

To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Hilda Solis
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: Ruth A. Wong, Director
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

HOMES FOR HEROES – THE COUNTY’S STRATEGY – (ITEM NO. 3 AGENDA OF JUNE 9, 2015) - REPORT

As directed by your Board, the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs is pleased to report that it has completed its study, working in coordination with the Chief Executive Office, the Department of Mental Health, the Community Development Commission, and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, to develop strategies to expeditiously connect homeless veterans who have a housing voucher with a stable, permanent home.

The Committee recognized several challenges in the current process that a veteran with a voucher must navigate to obtain housing. Based upon research of available literature, stakeholder meetings and interviews, we ask the Board to consider the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Improve access to and increase existing but limited housing stock through better communication with veterans, landlords and property managers, allowing vouchers to cross County and City portals, increasing support staff and reuse of existing government properties within the County’s boundaries.
Recommendation 2: Remove the multiple financial and procedural move-in barriers working with partner agencies to cover deposits, pre-inspections repairs, and appropriation of necessary furniture and appliances.
Recommendation 3: Tighten the existing Housing Safety Net by including the veteran claims process, legal assistance and education or training as part of their wrap around services.

While the partnerships between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Los Angeles Housing Authority and the United Way provide continuing support and access to resources, the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs believe these recommendations will assist the County in optimizing its efforts to expeditiously connect homeless veterans who have a housing voucher with a stable permanent home.

If you have any questions or require additional information please have your staff contact the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Director, Ruth Wong, at (213) 765-9678 or rwong@mva.lacounty.gov, or they may contact Stephanie Stone at (213) 795-9225 or sstone@mva.lacounty.gov.

RAW:ss

Attachment

Homes for Heroes –

Strategy for the County of Los Angeles



A Report by

County of Los Angeles

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

July 2015

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors

Hilda Solis, First Supervisorial District
Mark Ridley-Thomas, Second Supervisorial District
Sheila Kuehl, Third Supervisorial District
Don Knabe, Fourth Supervisorial District
Michael D. Antonovich, Fifth Supervisorial District

Board Study Committee

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Emilio Salas, Community Development Commission Housing Authority, County of Los Angeles
Dr. Carl McKnight, Department of Mental Health

Special Thanks

The Los Angeles County Veterans' Collaborative – Housing Committee (USC) (See Appendix A)
Homes for Heroes collective - United Way and Partner Agencies (See Appendix B)
Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) – West Los Angeles VA
County of Los Angeles Public Information Office
Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles
Volunteers of America
Los Angeles Mayor's Office
Department of Housing and Urban Development Los Angeles
County of Los Angeles Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk, Julia Melendez and Frances Posadas
Center for Innovation and Research on Veterans and Military Families (CIR), Nathan Graeser
Sepulveda VA Outpatient Clinic, Christina Rheingold, HUD-VASH Social Worker ASW
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HOME FOR HEROES – STRATEGY FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary

Working Group Conclusions	1
Summary Recommendations.....	1
Study Summary	2

Study Report

I. Board Charge	3
II. Homelessness Among Veterans.....	3
III. Housing Stock.....	5
IV. Women Veterans	5
V. Housing First	6
VI. Functional Zero – How to Define the End to Homelessness	6
VII. Where Are We Now	8
VIII. Committee Findings	8

References	13
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Appendix

Appendix A – Los Angeles County Veterans’ Collaborative – Housing Committee (USC)	16
Appendix B – Home For Heroes Collective	17
Appendix C – Top 9 Things You Can Do Right Now From 100K Homes	18

Homes for Heroes – Strategy for the County of Los Angeles

Executive Summary

Working Group Conclusions

As noted by the Fort Worth Housing Authority, the expeditious processing of The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program applications “is important in establishing the relationship with the Veteran and maintaining the connection and their belief that they can be housed.” Additionally, once obtained it is as important to provide continued support and access to resources to ensure that veterans are successful in their transition into permanent and secured housing. On June 9th, 2015, the Board of Supervisors voted in support of the “Home for Heroes” effort, a partnership of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, Los Angeles City Chamber of Commerce and the United Way. The process of partnership has brought into focus additional needs for specific resources, a tightening of the housing safety net, as well as existing opportunities for greater collaboration.

Summary Recommendations

A. Increase access to existing, but limited housing stock

Recommendations

1. Communication/Education
 - a. Networking: Create monthly Service Provider Areas (SPA) housing networking events linking landlords and property managers with veterans and their caseworkers throughout all eight SPAs.
2. Increase Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) to decrease portability barriers (voucher transfers between County and surrounding cities).
3. Investigate funding opportunities to increase staff support either through creation of County positions or contracting with partner agencies:
 - a. Housing Locators and Navigators
 - b. Housing Retention Coordinator
4. Increased bridge housing in SPAs 1, 3, and 8.
5. Coordinate with the private sector in the development of housing for low and moderate income households and those with special needs for both rental and homeownership. When appropriate, promote such development through incentives.

B. Remove move-in barriers which include multiple deposits, furniture and inspections

Recommendations

6. Investigate funding opportunities to create a grant program to cover the costs of move in (security deposits, utility turn on fees, furniture moves/purchase, etc.).
7. Develop a partner program with utilities companies to waive cost of deposit for low income veteran communities.
8. Examine opportunities to create HandyWorker Program to provide minor repairs prior to HUD-VASH Inspections working in partnership with:
 - a. City of Los Angeles to develop MOU with the City of Los Angeles Housing + Community Investment Department’s HandyWorker Program.
 - b. Los Angeles Trade Tech Community College: Provide certified training for veterans, with special consideration for female veterans, to develop the skills needed to be credentialed as HandyWorkers.
 - c. Habitat for Humanity: Develop program utilizing trained and certified veterans, with special consideration for female veterans, to work as HandyWorkers to provide needed repairs prior to move-in and annual inspections.

- C. Tighten the Housing Safety Net by including the veteran claims process, legal assistance and education or training. This would be included as part of their wrap around services.**

Recommendations

9. Connect HUD-VASH process with
 - a. Veteran benefits claims process
 - b. Free legal assistance; and
 - c. Education or training opportunities

Study Summary

The County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors on June 9, 2015, voted in support of “Home for Heroes” effort, a partnership of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, Los Angeles City Chamber of Commerce and the United Way. The Board went on to direct the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs working in coordination with the Chief Executive Office, the Department of Mental Health, the Community Development Commission, and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to develop strategies to expeditiously connect homeless veterans who have a housing voucher with a stable, permanent home.

Through research of existing literature this committee developed an extensive list of questions asking the 4WH (Who, What, When, Where and How) regarding the issue of expeditiously and successfully housing homeless veterans. Interviews were held with diverse groups of stakeholders from the community. They range from program directors, to case workers, and included homeless veterans with HUD-VASH vouchers who are currently going through the placement process.

All stakeholders expressed commitments to meet the goals of successfully and expeditiously housing veterans. The most noted concern was the lack of housing stock needed to meet the existing needs. Further review is needed to locate and consider property for repurposing throughout the County.

The second most often noted barrier is staffing. Recognizing that housing stock is low, the use of Housing Locators or Navigators, and Housing Retention Coordinator are that much more important to the process. Locators/Navigators can educate landlords and property managers who may have been prejudiced by an earlier experience, or may be fearful of the application process itself. Retention coordinators can be used as liaison between landlords, property managers and the veterans. Retention coordinators act as advocates in difficult times working in conjunction with case managers, who then will be freed to provide greater assistance to the veterans needs outside of housing.

Stakeholders, individually and in groups, believed that the barriers stated above could be overcome, and that the incorporation of the suggested opportunities should be folded into the current strategies to meet the goals that expedite the successful connection of homeless veterans who have a housing voucher with a stable, permanent home. As next steps, this committee suggests that additional research be conducted to assess the cost of development and delivery of these opportunities.

Homes for Heroes – Strategy for the County of Los Angeles

I. BOARD CHARGE

The County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors on June 9, 2015, voted in support of “Home for Heroes” effort, a partnership of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, Los Angeles City Chamber of Commerce and the United Way. The Board went on to direct the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs working in coordination with the Chief Executive Office, the Department of Mental Health, the Community Development Commission, and the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to develop strategies to expeditiously connect homeless veterans who have a housing voucher with a stable, permanent home.

II. HOMELESSNESS AMONG VETERANS

More than 2.4 million American soldiers have served in Operation Iraqi Freedom/New Dawn and Operation Enduring Freedom since September 11, 2001.¹ Hundreds of thousands of these men and women have returned from Iraq, and many more will be returning from Afghanistan in the next few years. “Soldiers are returning with higher rates of injury after multiple deployments with severe economic hardships,” says John Driscoll, president and chief executive officer of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans.² Studies show that nearly 20 percent of returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have experienced a traumatic brain injury, and 10 to 18 percent suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).³ A recent Pew Research Center survey showed that post-9/11 veterans found the transition to civilian life harder and had higher rates of post-traumatic stress than veterans who served in previous wars.⁴ Rates of military sexual trauma, which is associated with an increased risk of developing PTSD, are high among female veterans, who make up more than 11 percent of veterans of these two wars.⁵ For both male and female veterans, PTSD is linked to an increased risk of depression and substance abuse, which exacerbate social isolation and make employment difficult.⁶

The economic downturn and high unemployment rates add to the challenges these soldiers face on returning from active duty. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that veterans between the ages of 25 and 34, who make up more than half of post-9/11 veterans, had a 2011 unemployment rate of 12 percent, compared with 9.3 percent for nonveterans. Among veterans aged 18 to 24, the unemployment rate is much higher — 30.2 percent.⁷

All of these factors contribute to an increased risk of homelessness for returning veterans, even though they have higher education levels (62 percent of veterans over the age of 25 have at least some college compared with 56.4 percent of nonveterans) and higher median incomes compared with the general population. Female veterans and younger veterans are more than twice as likely to be homeless as their nonveteran counterparts. According to HUD’s 2011 Point-in-Time (PIT) Estimates of Homelessness, veterans constitute 14 percent of the homeless population, although they represent only 10 percent of the U.S. adult population. This PIT count documented 67,495 homeless veterans on a single night in January, a number that is 12 percent lower

Post-Traumatic Stress

% of all veterans who ...

Knew/served with someone who had PTS



Personally suffered from PTS



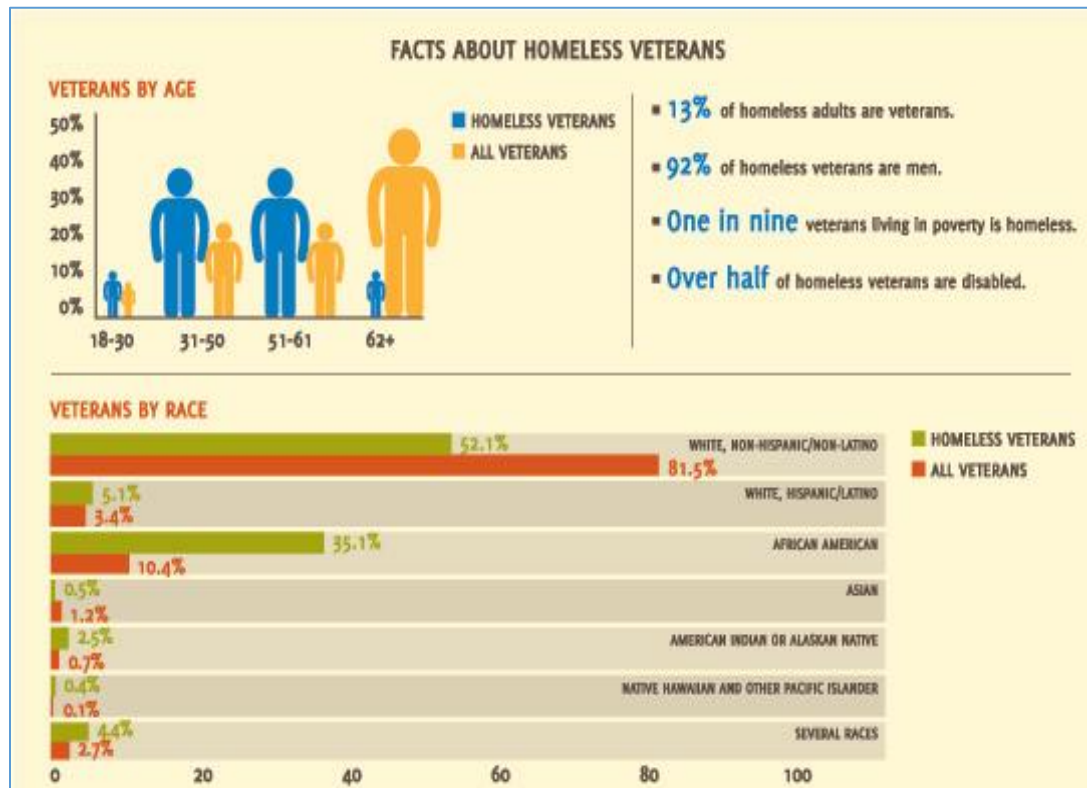
Notes: “Personally suffered from PTS” includes those who said, regardless of whether they had been diagnosed, they

Pew Research Center, Social & Demographic Trends
Project October 5, 2001

The Military-Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11

Era www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/10/05/war-and-sacrifice-in-the-post-911-era/.

than a year earlier.⁸ Throughout the entire year that ended in September 2010, nearly 145,000 veterans were homeless for at least one night.⁹



Note: Data shown are for sheltered homeless veterans — veterans who spent at least one night homeless in an emergency shelter or transitional housing facility between October 1, 2009 and September 30, 2010.

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, “Veteran Homelessness: Supplement to the 2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress,” 4–7.

The County of Los Angeles is home to the largest number of Veterans. As well, the County has long had the largest concentration of homeless veterans in the country — 4,343 in the latest count. Two-thirds of them, or 2,733, live in the city.¹⁰ This year the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Department of Veteran’s Affairs (VA) awarded to the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) 490 new HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers to house chronically homeless veterans. With this award, HACLA now operates the largest VASH program in the nation.¹¹ HACLA’s total allocation is now 3,669 HUD-VASH vouchers, providing more than \$30 million of rental assistance per year.

HUD-VASH is a joint program between the federal departments of HUD and Veterans Affairs, as well as local public housing agencies and VA Medical Centers. HUD-VASH vouchers provide homeless and chronically homeless veterans with tenant-based permanent supportive housing, which means housing assistance coupled with individually appropriate supportive services needed to retain housing. Eligible homeless veterans are referred to HACLA or HACoLA by case managers from the Greater Los Angeles VA Medical Center and community-based contractors. Case management and other supportive services are provided through the VA and VA-funded organizations.

III. HOUSING STOCK

A recent article at Salon.com by urbanist Henry Grabar noted that “the Los Angeles-Santa Ana-Long Beach Metro Area is now, by one measure, the most expensive big-city region in the country in which to buy a home; the average home price is nine times the average income. The vacancy rate for apartments in Los Angeles County, with 10 million people the nation’s largest, is now 3.3 percent — lower than in New York City.”

Additionally, the article suggests that the crisis “results from a confluence of policies that squelch supply.” These include land use regulations that are used by neighborhood groups to restrict or stop construction. A 2013 paper by planner Greg Morrow for UCLA found that from the mid-1960s onward, community opposition led to the downzoning of many areas into single-family residential, and this designation now exists across 80% of the city (compared to a quarter of New York City and San Francisco). Even in areas zoned for growth, developers are often forced by local resistance to build far less units than they wish.¹²

L.A.’s rent control laws, passed in 1978, also limit supply by reducing turnover, thus taking a large portion of units off the market. For example, 80% of the city’s 880,581 multifamily units are rent-controlled. This forces newcomers to compete for the far smaller stock of available market-rate units. Although the law doesn’t apply to new units, it discourages development by creating a climate of arbitrary governance, argues UCLA economist Paul Habibi.¹³

IV. WOMEN VETERANS

Homelessness among women veterans is expected to rise as increasing numbers of women in the military reintegrate into their communities as veterans. Women currently make up 8% of the total veteran population and 14.6% of the active duty military, increasing to an estimated 16% by 2035. The number of homeless women veterans has doubled from 1,380 in FY 2006 to 3,328 in FY 2010. While data systems for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) do not collect data on the risk factors contributing to female veteran homelessness, women veterans face unique challenges that increase their susceptibility to homelessness.

Within the homeless population, the frequency of mental illness is three to four times higher than the general population, with the rate of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) diagnoses almost doubled. Nearly 80% of homeless veterans suffer from mental health disorders, drug and/or alcohol abuse, or co-occurring disorders. PTSD is one of the largest mental health challenges facing returning veterans. From 2004-2008 the number of veterans seeking help for PTSD in the VA system increased from 274,000 to 442,000. PTSD and other mental health disorders lead to difficulties maintaining productive employment, among other difficulties, greatly increasing the risk of homelessness. A study done by Kelly et. al found that women who experience Military Sexual Trauma (MST) were nine times more at risk for PTSD. Cases of MST continue to grow, with one in five women reporting having experienced MST. While only constituting 14.6% of the military, women account for 95% of reported sex crime victims. According to a recent Pentagon report, the rate of violent sexual crimes within the military has increased by 64% since 2006. Fear of reprisal and being ostracized from coworkers prevents many women from reporting the abuse. Defense Secretary Panetta stated that the Department of Defense is aware that this is a “very under-reported crime,” with actual incidents of military sexual assault (MSA) being six times higher than reported. With 3,191 reported MSAs in 2011, the actual number of MSA incidences is predicted to be nearly 19,000. Because those who experience personal violence, including rape, are 6.5 times more likely to experience homelessness, women veterans who have experienced MST are at a greater risk for experiencing homelessness, especially when compounded by PTSD.¹⁴

V. HOUSING FIRST

Using the Housing First approach, New Orleans in 2014 housed all 227 of its homeless vets; now officials can focus on prevention and efficiently help veteran service members who newly become homeless. Things are going well with the city's campaign to fight nonveteran homelessness too. After Hurricane Katrina, 11,600 people there were homeless by 2007. While many recovered, others needed help. Through its Housing First program, New Orleans is on track to meet the end-of-2016 goal of placing virtually all its chronically homeless—defined as people who've been on the streets or in shelters for a year or more—under a permanent roof. To be clear, it's impossible to eradicate homelessness. There will always be someone down on his luck. That's why people in the industry use the term "functional zero," which means that a city has the housing and infrastructure in place to find a permanent residence for anyone who qualifies, whether it's a veteran, someone who's chronically homeless, or another candidate who might be eligible under a particular program.

In Salt Lake City it was the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that bought in and helped make Housing First a reality. "When homeless advocates first told me about it, I thought, 'These guys are smoking something—you can't end homelessness,'" Lloyd Pendleton, the manager of the LDS Church Welfare Department at the time Housing First was being considered in Salt Lake, told me. A former corporate executive who's always up for a challenge, Pendleton said he thought, "If anyone can do this, it's me." In 2006, he became the director of Utah's Homeless Task Force; under its Housing First campaign, chronic homelessness there has dropped from 1,932 people to 178 over a decade, putting Salt Lake, too, on track for its December 2016 goal of functional zero.

Housing First practitioners have made giant strides toward ending chronic homelessness elsewhere, including Denver, Seattle, and a long list of smaller cities. But Salt Lake City's entire homeless population was about the size of the homeless population just in downtown L.A. and a tenth the size of L.A.'s chronically homeless population. Success in a city where more than 44,000 homeless are spread out across 4,000 square miles is another challenge entirely.¹⁵

VI. FUNCTIONAL ZERO - How to define the end to homelessness

Federal, state, and local partners have committed to ending homelessness among Veterans by the end of 2015. The goal is to achieve and sustain "functional zero" – a well-coordinated and efficient community system that assures homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring and no Veteran is forced to live on the street. This means that every Veteran has access to the supports they need and want to avoid staying on the street and move quickly to permanent housing. Each community has its own definition of "functional zero".

New Orleans

In New Orleans, functional zero is the state at which all veterans entering homelessness move into an interim housing arrangement in a maximum of 30 days. While the quality of this interim housing is not known, conceptually the timeline in New Orleans matches that established in this document.

Phoenix & Salt Lake City

In both Phoenix and Salt Lake City, functional zero is the state at which (1) chronic homelessness among veterans has been functionally ended, (2) other episodes of homelessness among veterans end in an average of 30 days, and (3) veterans make up less than 5% of the total homeless population at any point in time. Neither city has met the 30-day benchmark, or established a date by which they will do so. For both cities, the concept of functionally ending chronic homelessness is essentially equivalent to the process described in this document (i.e., all known chronically homeless veterans are placed quickly in the pipeline to housing, and extraordinary outreach events turn up relatively few unknown veterans).

Phoenix's and Salt Lake City's 30-day condition is slightly more stringent than the 6-week condition proposed in this document, but as of yet neither city has reached that goal. The condition that no more than 5% of the homeless population has veteran status is contingent on demographic patterns and interventions for non-veterans and does not bear on the veteran experience.

Houston

In Houston, functional zero is the state at which an appropriate level of housing (rapid re-housing or permanent supportive housing) is available for any veteran who enters homelessness. While Houston aims to move veterans into that housing as quickly as possible, their definition of functional zero does not include an explicit restriction on the maximum length of an episode of homelessness. Additionally, while Houston is making efforts to reach every veteran in the system or on the street, their conception of functional zero is based purely on the veterans who reach the front door of the veteran system, apart from any veterans that do not.

Connecticut

The State of Connecticut has defined functional zero as the following:

1. A veteran is any individual who has served at least one day of active duty in the U.S. military, regardless of discharge status.
2. Within 30 days of entering homelessness, all veterans will be enrolled in services leading to permanent housing, and offered interim housing placements at GPD programs.
3. Veterans entering homelessness — and not entering transitional programs — will return to permanent housing in an average of six weeks, and the vast majority will return to permanent housing in under two months.
4. Only those veterans with a strong clinical need and/or stated desire for a transitional program will enter transitional housing, and the vast majority of those veterans return to permanent housing within 8 months.
5. Street homelessness among veterans will be effectively eliminated, but may not be at literal zero.
6. Fewer than 20% of entrances to homelessness will be recurring entrances.

United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)

USICH, in a memo about the Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, issued the following criteria for functional zero:

1. Community has taken steps to identify all veterans experiencing homelessness.
2. Zero unsheltered veterans.
3. Community has a plan and resources to house all remaining veterans experiencing homelessness.
4. Community has a robust homeless system that will identify future veterans entering homelessness and provide “quick access to permanent housing” for those veterans.
5. Community has sufficient resources to ensure the continued housing stability of previously housed veterans.

Zero: 2016

Community Solutions, through the Zero: 2016 campaign, defines zero as:

1. At any point in time, the number of veterans experiencing homelessness will be no greater than the current monthly housing placement rate for veterans experiencing homelessness
2. COC uses PIT methodology that adheres to generally accepted principles
3. 75% of veterans served by VA and HUD homeless programs have permanent housing at program exit.
4. 75% of projects have fully adopted a Housing First approach.
5. Communities make every effort to have zero unsheltered veterans in the 2016 PIT.

VA

In a presentation to Priority 1 Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) communities, the VA endorsed the following definition of functional zero:

1. Zero unsheltered veterans.
2. All veterans have “access to permanent housing” and the system can “quickly connect them to the help they need to achieve housing stability.”
3. National veteran PIT count below 12,500.

County of Los Angeles

The County of Los Angeles uses the Veterans Affairs definition of functional zero (see above).

VII. WHERE ARE WE NOW

Results of the 2015 Homeless Count came as a surprise to those who have worked so tirelessly to make a positive difference in this community. Homelessness overall has increased by 12% over the last two years from 39,461 to 44,359. An improving economy has put increased pressure on the rental market, with an 8% increase in rents, hitting hardest those of extremely low incomes. 60% of renters in LA County are paying more than half their income on rent.

Veteran homelessness decreased 6% in the last two years, and our community has reduced veteran homelessness by 39% since the start of Home For Good in 2011. This figure is remarkable, especially given that we now know that on average, 10 veterans become homeless each day, a rate that has tripled over the last few years. To put this in perspective, two years ago there were just over 4,600 homeless veterans. In the last two years, our partners-all of you-have housed over 7,500 veterans, and today our count is just over 4,300.¹⁷

One project that is seen to have affected homeless veterans is the 100,000 Homes Campaign. This campaign was a national movement of over 175 communities working together to find permanent homes for 100,000 chronic and medically vulnerable homeless Americans by July 2014. Community Solutions launched the Campaign in July 2010 as a national, time-bound movement of communities working together to find permanent homes for 100,000 of the country’s most vulnerable homeless individuals and families in four years. During the Campaign, teams participating in Housing Placement Boot Camps identified the “Top 9 Things You Can Do Right Now”. By implementing some of these steps, teams in Los Angeles had already reduced the length of time it took to get a veteran into housing by more than 2 months. (Appendix C) This list included partnerships between housing agencies and non-profit organizations to develop informal pre-inspection resources. Train all HUD-VASH case managers to access HINQ (Hospital Inquiry) database. The HINQ database is the best source for determining whether or not a Veteran will be eligible for HUD-VASH. Unfortunately, it is a somewhat difficult to navigate database that requires some training. Instead of relying upon a small number of staff to access the database, Betty Zamost of VA of Greater Los Angeles Health Care System determined that taking a few minutes to train all related staff ultimately sped up the process.

VIII. COMMITTEE FINDINGS

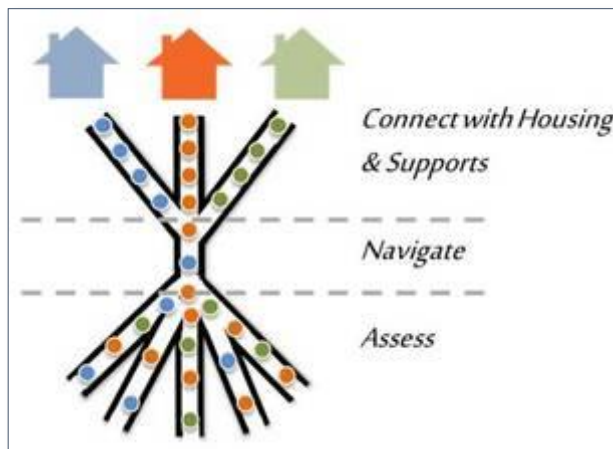
This committee has researched the issues and conducted interviews with stakeholders from the community to present the following barriers and opportunities. Development of these opportunities should be folded into the current strategies to expedite the successful connection of homeless veterans who have a housing voucher with a stable, permanent home. As next steps, this committee suggests that additional research be conducted to assess the cost of development and delivery of these opportunities.

Recommendation 1: Improve Access to and Increase Existing but Limited Housing Stock

Barrier: Low Housing Stock

Opportunity:

- **Landlord Recruitment** – There are currently over 500 veterans with vouchers searching for homes. Working in partnership, HACoLA, Los Angeles Mayor's Business Leaders Task Force, HACLA, and Los Angeles Housing and Community Investment Department (HCID) launched Home For Heroes. The Home For Good Funders Collaborative went on to develop the Coordinated Entry System (CES) throughout the County. CES is a no-wrong door, countywide system that engages and connects single adults experiencing homelessness to the optimal resource for their needs. Contributions for this program include the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Weingart Foundation, W.M. Keck Foundation, LAHSA, the VA, HACLA, County Board Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, DMH, DHS and many more.



Barrier: Communication/education

Communication and education is a common challenge for the landlords, property managers, and veterans alike. Documentation is seen as arduous and lengthy. Landlords and property managers may view veterans as damaged and dangerous. They are reluctant to take any veteran as a tenant. Others may have had a previous experience with a difficult veteran tenant and assume that all within the community will be the same.

Veterans often wait for their caseworkers to find units, or they may wait too long before beginning their search, running out of their allotted time, 60 day or 120 days with extension. Homeless veterans struggle to find stability while going through the housing process. They may drop out completely due to the lack of available transitional housing in the local area. Service Provider Areas (SPA) 1 (Antelope Valley), 3 (San Gabriel), and 8 (South Bay) are currently experiencing bed shortages.

Opportunity:

- **Networking:** HACoLA working with County departments, the Department of Veterans Affairs and VA contracted agencies develop and produce monthly SPA housing networking events linking landlords and property managers with veterans and their caseworkers. These events should be an opportunity for landlords and property managers to showcase their units while meeting directly with the veteran, their caseworker and the departments/agencies which provide support to the veteran clients thereby challenging any stigma attached to homeless veterans.
- **Increase MOUs to decrease portal barriers:** Under the current program, a veteran who has been awarded a HUD-VASH Voucher through HACoLA may use that voucher in only approved communities within the County of Los Angeles. Cities such as Pasadena and Long Beach have signed MOUs with the County of Los Angeles to allow veterans to cross over city and County boundaries to use their voucher without the delay of having to go back to the housing authority to ask permission.

- Increase Supportive Staff (Housing Locators/Navigators and Housing Retention Coordinators): Due to a shortage of Housing Locators/Navigators, a homeless veteran is left to find his/her own housing unit without the support of transportation or the skills to negotiate with a landlord/property manager. Housing Retention Coordinators (HRC) would add to the greater success of rehousing homeless veterans, with a greater emphasis on those who have had long term homelessness. The HRC would be a part of the veteran's HUD-VASH team, ensuring better communication that would include the landlord/property manager.
- Increased bridge housing in SPAs 1, 3, 8: Due to the lack of temporary housing in SPAs 1, 3, and 8 it is not uncommon for veterans to fall out of the HUD-VASH process while looking for their housing units. The Committee suggests additional research into the use/reuse of unused properties throughout the County such as Lanterman Developmental Center in Pomona.
- Standardize security deposits to be included within the HUD/VASH process.



Lanterman Developmental Center was a hospital unit within an institution for the mental hospital in Pomona, CA, with 481 beds and on-campus staff housing.

Recommendation 2: Remove the multiple financial and procedural Move-In barriers

Barrier: Move in costs

Moving into permanent supportive housing involves a number of costs which include application fees, first and last month's rent, security deposits, and utility deposits. In addition there is the cost of furnishing. Even the most modest of apartments require a bed, chair and table, pot, pans, plates and utensils. Units may require a refrigerator as well. A successful move would require Veterans to either purchase those items or to move items from storage. These costs have often been covered by Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) funding, which at this time is quickly running out.

The SSVF program was established in 2011 to promote housing stability among homeless and at-risk Veterans and their families. Under the SSVF program, VA awards grants to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that can provide a range of supportive services to eligible very low-income Veteran families. Services include outreach, case management, assistance in obtaining VA benefits, and help in accessing and coordinating other public benefits. SSVF grantees can also make time-limited temporary payments on behalf of Veterans to cover rent, utilities, security deposits and moving costs.

Opportunity: Move-in Grant

- Investigate funding opportunities to create a grant program to cover move in cost (see above).
- Develop partner program with utility companies to waive cost of deposit for low income veteran community.

Barrier: HUD VASH Inspections

Prior to move in each apartment requires an inspection from Housing Authority Inspectors. Repairs for the smallest of infractions can delay move in, creating additional burden on the veteran and endanger the successful move to stable and permanent housing.

Opportunity: Handy Worker Program

- Research opportunities to develop a Handy Worker Program partnering with government and nonprofit agencies, utilizing trained veterans to make minor repairs in preparation to move-in and annual Housing Authority Inspection.
 - City of Los Angeles: Develop MOU with the City of Los Angeles Housing + Community Investment Department's Handy Worker Program. Currently the program provides free minor home repairs for low-income seniors and disabled persons who own and occupy a single family home in the City of Los Angeles. It is suggested that HACoLA working with HACLA include within the current program coverages for veterans with housing vouchers, and that the program would assist in the minor repairs that may be needed to pass move-in and annual inspection to ensure safe and adequate housing.
 - Trade Tech: Provide certified training for veterans, with special consideration for female veterans, to develop the skills needed to be credentialed as Handy Workers.
 - Habitat for Humanities: Develop program utilizing trained and certified veterans, with special consideration for female veterans, to work as Handy Workers to provide needed repairs prior to move-in and annual inspections.

Recommendation 3: Tighten the existing Housing Safety Net

Barrier: Sustainability

Once a veteran has secured housing, VAMC case managers are responsible for ensuring that he or she remains stably housed and is connected to any necessary clinical services. Often times what is missing to ensure success is the connection to services that ensure financial sustainability.

Opportunity: Include additional supportive resources as part of the wrap around services.

- Veteran claims process: The Department of Military and Veteran Affairs connect veterans with their veteran benefits through the veteran claims process, often times providing veterans with financial compensation. Legal assistance: Many of our homeless veterans have minor legal issues which can restrict them from employment (i.e. child support arrears, tickets which have turned into warrants). There are current programs established between the DMVA and Los Angeles County Bar Association, as well as DMVA and the Superior Court Family Court Self Help clinic which could easily be included as wrap around services.
- Education or Training: Working with partner agencies such as the Department of Veteran Affairs and Goodwill Southern California, veterans may receive financial assistance for education or training.
- Employment services: For those veterans who are capable of working they can be automatically enrolled in services through a work source center in their new neighborhood or working through a partner organization such as U. S. Veterans Initiative.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A:

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS' COLLABORATIVE – HOUSING COMMITTEE (USC)

- OPCC
- 211 LA County
- Beach City Foundation
- Carrington Mortgage Holdings
- Cloudbreak Communities
- Coalition for Veterans' Land
- Corporation for Supportive Housing
- County of Los Angeles Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- CSH
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Downtown Women's Center
- Drama Stage-Qumran
- DTLA Stand Down
- Fame Free Legal Clinic/Housing Program
- Habitat For Humanity Greater Los Angeles
- Habitat for Humanity San Fernando/Santa Clarita Valley
- Holman UMC
- Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles
- Immanuel Housing Inc.
- Inner City Law Center
- LA City Mayor's Office of Veteran Affairs
- LA County DPSS General Relief Program
- LA Family Housing
- LA Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)
- Los Angeles Film School
- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority
- Mental Health America of Los Angeles - Operation Healthy Homecoming
- Metro
- Military Women In Need
- Mullen House/Coalition for Veterans' Land
- Neighborhood Housing Services of LA County
- New Directions for Veterans
- Office of the Sacred Trust
- Ottosen & Co
- Palm Communities
- Pasadena City College
- PATH (people Assisting the Homeless)
- PATH SSVF Program
- PUENTE Learning Center
- Salvation Army Haven (Victory Place)
- SCHARP
- Shelter Partnership, Inc.
- The Francisco Homes
- USC MSW Intern- LA Family Housing
- Veterans 4 America
- Veterans Administration Hospital/Domiciliary
- Veteran's Administration HUD-VASH Program
- Vets Helping Vets Homeless Feeding and Toy Drive
- Volunteers of America, LA-Battle Buddy Bridge
- Volunteers of America, Los Angeles
- Wells Fargo Home Mortgage
- West Bay Housing Corp
- West Los Angeles VA- Homeless Outreach

Appendix B:
HOME FOR HEROES COLLECTIVE

VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTHCARE LOCATIONS

1. VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System

Full Service Hospital
11301 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90073
(310) 487-3711

www.losangeles.va.gov

2. VA Long Beach Healthcare System

Full Service Hospital
5901 East 7th Street
Long Beach, CA 90822
(562) 826-8000

3. Sepulveda Outpatient Clinic and Nursing

16111 Plummer Street
North Hills, CA 91343
(818) 891-7711 or (800) 516-4567

4. VA Los Angeles Ambulatory Care Center

351 East Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 253-2677

5. Lancaster Community Based Outpatient Clinic

547 West Lancaster Boulevard
Lancaster, CA 93536
(661) 729-8655 or (800) 515-0031
Fax:(661) 729-8656

6. Pasadena Community Based Outpatient Clinic

420 West Las Tunas Drive
San Gabriel, CA 91776
(213) 253-2677 ext. 14505

7. Gardena Community Based Outpatient Clinic

1251 Redondo Beach Boulevard, 3rd Floor
Gardena, CA 90247
(310) 851-4705

8. East Los Angeles Community Based Outpatient

5426 E. Olympic Boulevard
City of Commerce, CA 90040
(323) 725-7557

VETERAN SERVICE PROVIDERS

• **Volunteers of America/Los Angeles**

3600 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1500
Los Angeles, CA 90010
(213) 389-1500

www.voala.org/services/veteran

• **U.S. VETS-Inglewood**

733 S. Hindry Avenue
Inglewood, CA 90045
(310) 348-7600

www.usvetsinc.org/inglewood

• **New Directions, Inc.**

11303 Wilshire Boulevard, VA Bldg 116
Los Angeles, CA 90073
(310) 914-4045

www.newdirectionsinc.org/about

• **SRO Housing Corporation**

354 S. Spring Street, Suite 400
Los Angeles, CA 90013
(213) 229-9640

www.srohousing.org

• **The Salvation Army-Southern California**

11301 Wilshire Boulevard Idg 207 & 212
Los Angeles, CA 90073
(310) 478-3711 Ext. 44353

www.salvationarmysocal.org

• **Weingart Center Association**

566 South San Pedro
Los Angeles, CA 90013
(213) 627-9000

www.weingart.org

• **Los Angeles Family Housing**

7843 Lankershim Boulevard
North Hollywood, CA 91605
(818) 982-4091

www.lafh.org

• **PATH (People Assisting the Homeless)**

340 N. Madison Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90004
(323) 413-7783

ssvf@epath.org

Appendix C:

TOP 9 THINGS YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW FROM 100K HOMES

These steps were identified by teams participating in Housing convened by the 100K Homes Campaign and the United Way of Greater LA in Los Angeles and by the 100K Homes Campaign and Corporation for Supportive Housing in New York City. By implementing some of these steps, teams in Los Angeles have already reduced the length of time it takes to get a Veteran into housing by more than 2 months. Similar efforts are underway in New York City and Las Vegas.

1. Housing Authority and Non-Profits: The Housing Agency can share its Housing Inspection Standards with the non-profit organizations helping Veterans find apartments. The non-profit organization can do informal pre-inspection to help their clients find an apartment that will pass the Housing Quality Inspection the first time.

Days Eliminated: 50

Tell me more: If the housing locator who is helping the Veteran find an apartment has the housing inspection checklist handy, he or she can help the Veteran find an apartment that will sail through the Housing Quality Inspection the first time. Re-inspecting an apartment can add weeks if not months to the process. Having a housing locator hunting for viable apartment units makes it possible for you to do your housing placement process in parallel instead of sequentially. While one team is working with the Veteran to complete his or her housing application, the other team is working with landlords to find apartments that will easily pass inspection and get approved to rent to someone receiving a housing subsidy.

2. Housing Agency: Eliminate any locally imposed minimum income requirements

Days Eliminated: 44

Tell me more: While there is a cap on how much income a Veteran can have, there is no minimum amount of income required under HUD's regulations and zero income is allowable. In fact, requiring income at all is against HUD regulations. Of course, any good case manager will continue to work with a client to obtain income, but make sure that your housing agency does not require income as a prerequisite for *entry* into housing.

3. VA: Eliminate any requirements for the Veteran to enter treatment as a condition for receiving a VASH voucher

Days Eliminated: 30 to 180

Who has already done this? VA of Greater Los Angeles

Tell me more: There are no requirements for Veterans to demonstrate they are clean and sober for any length of time or be "ready" for housing for admission to HUD-VASH. The Veteran must agree to participate in case management services tailored to meet the needs of the Veteran. The Veteran will be required to follow the PHA and landlord's rules, which may

Appendix C:

TOP 9 THINGS YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW FROM 100K HOMES (CONT.)

have a requirement for no drug or alcohol use, but there is no set period of sobriety to qualify for HUD-VASH. It is not the role of the case manager to “enforce” the PHA/landlord rules, but rather work with the Veteran to understand the consequences of violating tenant rules. VA case managers are not cops!

4. Housing Agency: Allow use of the DD-214 to satisfy the Identification Requirements: don't require birth certificates and social security cards.

Days Eliminated: 30

Who has already done this? Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA); New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)

Tell me more: To verify identity, HUD regulations at 24 CFR 5.216(g) only require that the Veteran submit an original, government-issued document that includes the social security number. The document can be issued by a federal, state, or local government agency, and the VA's DD-214 form qualifies. The Veteran does not need a birth certificate. The Veteran does not need a social security card. If your housing agency requires this, work with them to modify their policy or, if necessary, their administrative plan.

5. VA: Train all VASH case managers to access HINQ database

Days Eliminated: 5

Who has already done this? VA of Greater Los Angeles is in the process of completing this.

Tell me more: The HINQ database is the best source for determining whether or not a Veteran will be eligible for VASH. Unfortunately, it is a somewhat difficult to navigate database that requires some training. Instead of relying upon a small number of people to access the database, Betty Zamost of VA of Greater LA determined that taking a few minutes to train everyone will ultimately speed up the process.

6. Housing Agency: Negotiate rent-reasonableness with the prospective landlord at the time of the housing inspection

Days Eliminated: 21

Who has already done this? Long Beach Housing Authority

Tell me more: Housing agencies often make sure the apartment is going to pass inspection before negotiating with the landlord. Then a different department within the housing agency will negotiate the rent with the landlord. Long Beach Housing Authority has allowed the rent reasonableness to be negotiated at the same time as the housing inspection.

7. Housing Agency: Issue provisional vouchers to enable the Veteran to begin housing search while the paperwork is being finalized

Days Eliminated: 7

Who has already done this? Long Beach Housing Authority

Tell me more: Housing Agencies must confirm that the Veteran is not on a state lifetime sex offender registry. Upon receiving an application, the administrator immediately cross-references www.nsopw.gov (national sex offender public search). If the Veteran is not on that list, they'll issue a provisional voucher so the Veteran can begin looking for an apartment. The Veteran signs a waiver stating their understanding that this is a provisional voucher and attesting that they are not a registered lifetime sex offender. They are not allowed to move in until an official voucher is issued after the housing agency receives confirmation from the FBI database, which can take as long as a week.

8. Human Services Agencies and the VA: Co-locate and centralize “one-shot deal” or HPRP paperwork with a Veterans service center

Days Eliminated: 55

Who has already done this? New York City's Human Resources Administration (NYCHRA) and NY Harbor VA.

Tell me more: Human Resources Administrations can provide funding to help people obtain housing (e.g., security deposit, broker's fee). NYCHRA and the NY Harbor VA are working together to set up a one-stop system to expedite access to these benefits for Veterans. A delay in benefits can put a selected apartment at risk, since landlords cannot typically wait for 1-2 months for a security deposit or other up-front costs.

HRA's “one-stop” Veterans Center is a multi-service center for Veterans in Brooklyn, and staff were trained on the new process in October. The ultimate goal is to be able to process all paperwork and approve benefits within 48 hours.

9. Attend the next 100,000 Homes Campaign Housing Placement Boot Camp and discover ways that you can streamline your housing placement process in your community.